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United for Quality Care

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Elizabeth Strickland, CNA, UCHC  
District 1199 New England  
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Elizabeth Strickland and I am a CNA at UConn Health Center which means I bathe patients, transfer them to wheelchairs, dress them, run EKGs and collect bloodwork as well as toilet and feed them. I also hold their hands when they are scared and comfort them when the need is there. I love my job because I love providing care to my patients. However, we desperately need to expand our hospital staff – because of short staffing - so that our patients get good quality lifesaving services, and CNA's like me can have support.

Short staffing is a huge problem. It means we have poor quality interactions between us and our patients and our other staff members. It increases our patient safety risks and results in adverse consequences for patient. To put it bluntly, short staffing impacts quality of care, and our community deserves better. WE are all they have and they count on us.

Short staffing means 12 to 15 patients or more to one CNA. This is not a manageable number. If something happens to one of those patients, it requires the full attention of the CNA that is responding to it. While that CNA is caring for that patient, all of the other patients they are assigned are out there on their own, waiting for care. Short staffing causes incontinence when patient cannot get toiletied when needed. Falls are rare but more likely to happen when we are short staffed. And staff members like me can also fall and hurt ourselves as well running to help a patient because we are so short.

We are suffering anxieties from not being able to keep up with care, and we are exhausted from being mandated 3 to 4 times a week. We are exhausted and way overworked. We cannot serve our communities if we are overworked and sick ourselves. Short staffing causes major fatigue and it is impacting our safety, health and Mental Health. We are experiencing increased levels of stress, we have poor eating habits and no time for family and social obligations because we don't have time to do anything but go to work. On top of that we feel like we are undervalued because we get no extra compensation for being on call. We do it at regular pay even though some of us have to pay extra for childcare or transportation to get to work. Please help workers like me by funding Uconn Health Center so we can hire more staff. Thank you for your time.